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ABSTRACT

The articles collected in this special issue of "Reading"offer a response to and elaboration of the report of the Bullock Committee on reading. An editorial introduction describes the focus and implications of the report and outlines the committee's main recommendations. Included in the discussion are the following articles: "Theoretical Overview," by John Downing, summarizing the political origins of the report; "Early Reading," by Geoffrey Roberts; "Reading in the Later Years," by Joyce M. Morris; "Language and Talk," by Asher Cashdan; "Linguistic Perspectives," by David Crystal, "Remedial Aspects," by Ronald Gulliford; and "Teacher Education," by Donald Moyle. (KS)

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Reading

a journal for
the study and improvement
of reading and related skills

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A special issue on

A LANGUAGE FOR LIFE

(Report of the Bullock Committee)

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Edited by
DEREK THACKRAY

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Copies of the journal are available from the General Secretary,
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Editorial

This is the first time an issue of the journal has been devoted to one particular topic, but as *A language for life* ' will be of value for many years to come as a basis for further discussion and development ' (Mr. Reg. Prentice, Secretary of State for Education) this new venture is timely and I trust will meet with the approval of members.

The production of this special issue devoted to the more important aspects of the Bullock Report would have been impossible without the full and enthusiastic co-operation of all the contributors. They are all important, busy people who have given freely and generously their time and effort on behalf of the Association; UKRA is greatly indebted to each one of them.

The Bullock Committee was appointed in June 1972 under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock, following a report by the NFER on reading standards in schools (*The Trends of Reading Standards* published in 1972). Members of the Committee were drawn from all branches of the educational service, and UKRA was pleased and privileged to have on the Committee three past presidents, Keith Gardner, Vera Southgate-Booth and John Merritt. The terms of reference were to consider in relation to schools:

(1) all aspects of teaching the use of English, including reading, writing and speech;
(2) how present practice might be improved, and the role that initial and in-service teacher training might play; and
(3) to what extent arrangements for monitoring the general level of attainment in these skills could be introduced or improved.

The Committee's first term of reference enabled it to stress language in education, beginning with the influence of the home in pre-school years and ranging from the growth of language and reading ability in the early stages to the teaching of English in the secondary school as far as the statutory school leaving age. The Report is based on the principle that

reading, writing, talking and listening should be treated as a unity and that there should be unbroken continuity across the years. Reading, which is commonly discussed as if it were a separable activity, is thus seen in the Report as part of a child's general language development and not as a discrete skill which can be considered in isolation from it. A main argument of the Report is that there is no one method, medium, approach, device or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read, and that there is no substitute for a thorough understanding of all the factors at work. For this reason the Report enters into considerable technical detail about the reading process. It also examines the part to be played by the internal organisation of schools and the resources available to them in the teaching of reading as in the various other aspects of English. Throughout the Report a good deal of attention has been given to the needs of children who are retarded in reading or whose language is inadequate, but it has been confined to children being educated in ordinary schools. The inquiry did not extend to children receiving special educational treatment in separate schools. It did, however, include a consideration of the needs of adult illiterates and also of the language problems of children from families of overseas origin.

The second term of reference was to consider the role of initial and in-service training in the improvement of present practice. The Report examines the criticisms levelled at teacher training and makes recommendations for a substantial language course in the training of all teachers. It relates the initial and in-service phases of the teacher's continuing professional education and recommends an increase in in-service training opportunities.

The third term of reference was to consider the introduction or improvement of arrangements of monitoring the general level of attainment in the skills involved in the use of English. The Report therefore analyses the limitation of the existing system of measuring national standards of reading and proposes and describes a system of continuous monitoring which will not only evaluate achievement in a wide range of reading skills but introduce an assessment of writing ability.

In reaching its conclusions the Committee considered evidence from several hundred individuals and organisations and visited

a hundred schools and twenty-one colleges of education. It also carried out a survey of the organisation and practice of English teaching in all its aspects on 1,415 primary schools and 392 secondary schools, the first time a survey of English on this scale has been attempted in this country. The findings of this survey are published in the Report.

It is unfortunate that the Report has been published at a time of severe financial restraints, as this will mean that action on recommendations involving additional resources may have to be postponed. However, as Sir Alan Bullock has pointed out, many recommendations could be implemented within the framework of current expenditure either by redeploying resources or changing practices. It is hoped that all local authorities and all teachers will look carefully at the recommendations so that the long awaited Bullock Report *does* provide the stimulus for raising standards of literacy at all levels.

Derek Thackray

The main recommendations

There are 333 conclusions and recommendations in the Bullock Report and seventeen principal recommendations. Listed below are the seventeen principal recommendations but in presenting them the Committee's warning that ' it would be altogether misleading to take these seventeen recommendations as a distillation of what we have to say ' must be noted.

The principal recommendations are:

1 A system of monitoring should be introduced which will employ new instruments to assess a wider range of attainments than has been attempted in the past and allow new criteria to be established for the definition of literacy.

2 There should be positive steps to develop the language ability of children in the pre-school and nursery and infant years. These should include arrangements for the involvement of parents, the improvement of staffing ratios of infant schools, and the employment of teachers' aides whose training has included a language element.

3 Every school should devise a systematic policy for the development of reading competence in pupils of all ages and ability levels.

4 Each school should have an organized policy for language across the curriculum, establishing every teacher's involvement in language and reading development throughout the years of schooling.

5 Every school should have a suitably qualified teacher with responsibility for advising and supporting his colleagues in language and the teaching of reading.

6 There should be close consultation between schools, and the transmission of effective records, to ensure continuity in the teaching of reading and in the language development of every pupil.

7 English in the secondary school should have improved resources in terms of staffing, accommodation, and ancillary help.

8 Every LEA should appoint a specialist English adviser and should establish an advisory team with the specific responsibility

of supporting schools in all aspects of language in education.

9 LEAs and schools should introduce early screening procedures to prevent cumulative language and reading failure and to guarantee invididual diagnosis and treatment.

10 Additional assistance should be given to children in reading and where it is the school's policy to withdraw pupils from their classes for special help they should continue to receive support at the appropriate level on their return.

11 There should be a remedial clinic or remedial centre in every LEA giving access to a comprehensive diagnostic service and expert medical, psychological, and teaching help. In addition to its provision for children with severe reading difficulties the centre should offer an advisory service to schools in association with the LEA's specialist adviser.

12 Provision for the tuition of adult illiterates and semi-literates should be greatly increased, and there should be a national reference point for the co-ordination of information and support.

13 Children of families of overseas origin should have more substantial and sustained tuition in English. Advisers and specialist teachers are required in greater strength in areas of need.

14 A standing working party should be formed, made up of representatives of the DES and LEAs, to consider capitation allowances and the resources of schools, and a satisfactory level of book provision should be its first subject of inquiry.

15 A substantial course of language in education (including reading) should be part of every primary and secondary school teacher's initial training, whatever the teacher's subject or the age of the children with whom he or she will be working.

16 There should be expansion in in-service education opportunities in reading and the various other aspects of the teaching of English, and these should include courses at diploma and higher degree level. Teachers in every LEA should have access to a language/reading centre.

17 There should be a national centre for language in education, concerned with the teaching of English in all its aspects, from language and reading in the early years to advanced studies with sixth forms.

Theoretical overview

JOHN DOWNING

> You taught me language: and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,
> For learning me your language!

Such may be the sentiment of the enthusiast for specialist education in reading. He may complain that the Bullock Committee has made him fluent in all the ills of the teaching of reading in the English school system, but that this knowledge serves only for criticizing the Committee for not going far enough in their recommendations for curing them. He may feel disappointed that bolder changes have not been proposed. But what may seem timid and half-hearted to the tiny minority of reading specialists will be regarded as rather revolutionary by the majority of teachers and parents in England. Actually the contents of the Bullock Report are quite predictable theoretically from the comparative study of reading education in England vis-à-vis other countries. The Bullock Report fits well into the course of development of education in England. The trends found in the *Comparative Reading* study (Downing, 1973) can be discerned here again with their inevitable positive and negative influences on children's development of reading and writing skills.

The Bullock Report is in itself a perfect example of one of the features of education in England—gradual evolutionary change is always preferred to revolution. This is one of the main differences between reading education in England and in the United States, for example. Curiously, the long term effect in many aspects of schooling is that the real change can be detected with more certainty in England than it can in America, where swings of the pendulum often put the clock back, as happened, for instance, when the Sputnik panic stampeded American schools into returning to formal alphabetic and phonic methods of teaching reading during the past decade. The wisdom of the slow but sure principle is brilliantly illustrated by the contrast

between the conclusions of the Bullock Committee and Stuart Froome's 'Note of Dissent' appended to the Report. The Committee coolly, calmly and with meticulous care examined all the evidence that could be brought to bear on speculative claims that standards of literacy have been falling. The evidence and its discussion are first rate in their quality of objective reporting. It seems clear that the belief that standards have dropped is false. But the Committee very properly does not express complacency about this finding. Public demands for higher levels of skills in reading and expressive writing have increased greatly. Therefore, ways must be found to obtain still better results than the good ones currently being achieved.

To reach this higher level of aspiration in the teaching of reading, the Bullock Report pursues the path of evolutionary change through reaffirming current principles and good practices and building in their foundation a number of new developments.

Sound principles and good practices retained

The two central principles of post war education in England stand out like lighthouses throughout the whole report. First and foremost is the principle spelled out in the 1944 Education Act that each child must be taught according to his own individual age, ability and aptitude--the principle of child-centredness. The Plowden Report reaffirmed and clarified that principle in its title *Children and Their Primary Schools*. Bullock's contribution is to apply this principle to the details of the teaching of reading. The second principle is articulated with the first. It is the professional autonomy of the teacher, long recognized among comparative educationists as the most outstanding surface feature of schools in England. Bullock brings out with great clarity the full implications of the principle of autonomy for the professional responsibility of teachers of reading and their trainers. Both these principles are reflected in the current good practices recognized in the Report.

The first principle, the child-centred approach, is valued for its effectiveness in the teaching of reading. Unlike the curriculum-centred approach found in many other countries, child-centred education takes account of how children do learn to read as well

as what the teacher thinks he is teaching. The Committee has put into the Report a wealth of information about children's learning behaviour which will provide valuable help to teachers and students trying to apply the child-centred principle. For example, Bullock brings out very clearly that the psychological aim of reading and writing education is to develop the child's *self-control* of the technical skills involved, and that this can be achieved fully only when the individual pupil is purposefully involved in relevant language experiences. ' The child should be brought up to see this technical control not as an abstraction imposed from without but as the means of communicating with his audience in the most satisfying manner '. (p. 8)

The natural characteristics of child development as they affect learning to read are comprehensively though briefly presented and these parts of the Report constitute a mine of information for teachers and education students. This information takes account of the most recent research findings, as the following important quotations show:

> To see letter shapes as adults see them is by no means a natural and automatic process. On the contrary, each child may have his own idiosyncratic ways of looking at letters. . . . (p. 81)
>
> They can see as well as any adult that b is p upside down, just as well as they can see that the doll or train is upside down. Where they have trouble is in learning to recognize these reflected and rotated forms as entirely different letters. They would regard it as very odd if a doll had to be called Betty instead of Susan according to which way it faced, or the train was called a motor car when it reversed. (p. 81)

Exploratory talk by the pupils has an important function in the process of learning (p. 526). Therefore:

> A priority objective for *all* schools is a commitment to the speech needs of their pupils and a serious study of the role of oral language in learning. (p. 156)
>
> It is a confusion of everyday thought that we tend to regard ' knowledge ' as something that exists independently of someone who knows. ' What is known ' must in fact be brought to life afresh with every ' knower ' by his own efforts (p. 50). Therefore:
>
> . . . a learner needs to trace the steps from the familiar to the new, from the fact or idea he possesses to that which he is to acquire. In other words, the learner has to make a journey in thought for himself. (p. 141)
>
> The experience of individual children will vary, and this means that the teacher's appraisal of each child's needs and achievement is the key to success. (p. 67) Therefore:
>
> . . . to expect a whole class to maintain a steady and uniform advance

along a line of linguistic achievement is unrealistic. (p. 173)

Furthermore:

Individual attention should not be confined to poor readers, for average and above average children also need it if they are to make optimal progress. (p. 524)

Other ways in which the Bullock Report reflects this essential first principle of the child-centred approach to reading are: the Committee's concern for the total overall development of the child; the integration of reading and writing with other subjects and with activities inside and outside school; and the child's right to learn to read at any age, no matter how young.

But the most significant reflection of the child-centred principle is in the Bullock Committee's strong endorsement of the language experience approach to the teaching of reading. This shows clearly that child-centred education is embraced for reasons of its educational efficiency. The 'language experience approach' technically refers to a method of teaching reading which combines (1) an eclectic use of all available methods and materials with (2) above all, the employment of the child's own individual language and experiences in the material he reads and writes. The following passages reflect the Bullock Committee's position:

There is no one method, medium, approach, device or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read. (p. 521)

. . . we must emphasize that we regard the reading scheme as an ancillary part of a school's reading programme, and nothing more . . . and we welcome the enterprise of those schools which have successfully planned the teaching of reading without the use of a graded series. (p. 109)

Our own view is that the kind of language development under discussion will be more likely to take effect the more it uses as its medium the daily experiences of the classroom and the home. (pp. 66–67)

We described . . . how the good infant school develops the child's writing activities from small beginnings. . . . Work of the kind discussed in these paragraphs is essential to *the language experience approach to reading we are advocating*. (p. 103, italics added)

What we are suggesting is that children should learn about language by experiencing it and experimenting with its use. (p. 173)

The surest means by which a child is enabled to master his mother tongue is by exploiting the process of discovery through language in all its uses. (p. 519)

> Competence in language comes above all through its purposeful use, not through the working of exercises divorced from context. (p. 528)

The second principle, the professional autonomy of the teacher, is linked to the importance of the teacher as the prime factor in children's reading achievements. Throughout the Bullock Report every judgment and every recommendation is couched in terms of the individual school's and individual teacher's right and duty to decide what and how to teach, although there is an important and overriding recommendation that every individual school should develop its own consistent policy for the teaching of reading.

> It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the teacher is the biggest single factor for success in learning to read and use language. The school with high standards of reading is the one where the teachers are knowledgeable about it and are united in ascribing to it a very high priority. A coherent strategy, understood and agreed by the staff, is the best instrument for improving standards of reading and language . . . (p. 212)

Recommendations for change

The Bullock Committee's recommendations for change, too, are naturally rooted in the evolution of reading education in England. For example, Bullock makes several proposals for involving parents more with the schools' work in helping to learn to read. This is a continuation of the Plowden trend to try to break down the English tradition of no 'interference' by parents in what goes on in the classroom. Other examples are found in the reflection of the child-centred principle in a number of other recommendations: (1) mitigation of breaks in the transfer from infant to junior, and junior to secondary schools; (2) improvements in the teaching of children from cultural and linguistic minorities; (3) reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio; and (4) further phasing out of streaming.

The two most significant breaks with the past are the Bullock Committee's proposals for improving teacher training in reading education and for extending provisions for the teaching of reading into the junior and secondary schools. But even these changes are cast in the mould of conventional educational beliefs in England. This is predictable, of course, from the 'evolution, not revolution' principle. From the point

of view of the specialist in reading, it is disappointing, however, because the changes proposed fall far short of what will be needed if the schools in England are going to cope with the demand for higher standards of reading and writing which the Bullock Committee has recognized.

The disastrous effect of the past policy of restricting reading instruction to the infant school is frankly admitted in the Bullock Report. It clearly recognizes that this must be changed by deliberate provisions for continuing the development of reading skills in junior and in secondary schools. Since the provisions are so grievously inadequate at these levels at the present time, the Bullock Committee quite logically goes on to call for the creation of a force of teachers and advisers well qualified in the field of reading education. This in turn requires changes in initial and in-service teacher training, and the Bullock Report recommends a series of changes designed to produce teachers with specialist qualifications in reading and to give all teachers an understanding of their pupils' needs in developing reading skills at all levels of schooling. For example, the Report states: ' All teachers in training, irrespective of the age-range they intend to teach, should complete satisfactorily a substantial course in language and reading ' (p. 549).

Unfortunately, these provisions are shackled to the traditional concept that reading is merely a part of the subject of ' English '. For example, Bullock recommends that:

> Every authority should have an advisory team with the specific responsibility of supporting schools in all aspects of language in education. This would encompass English from language and reading in the early years to advanced reading and English studies at the highest level of the secondary school. (p. 536) Also:
> The advisory teachers should be appointed for their special interest in English and should be drawn from among those with responsibility for language in the primary schools and from English teachers in secondary schools. (p. 536)

This advisory team is to have wide responsibilities including ' providing in-service training '. That this is likely to be a case of *the blind leading the blind* is clear not only from the past very bad record of ' English ' teaching as regards reading instruction, but also from those parts of the Bullock Report focussing on ' English ' teaching rather than reading instruction.

These latter parts are often pompous, dreary and out of date. They show a preference for subjective opinion and a disregard for published research which is quite different from the objective research oriented approach in the sections devoted to reading education. These subjective opinions of the ' English ' parts of the Bullock Report are sometimes totally wrong. For example, the Report states that in the USA there is a ' very sharp " vertical split " between Reading and English. Indeed the teachers belonged to separate professional associations which scarcely communicated ' (p. 117). This is absolute nonsense. Presumably, the professional associations referred to are the IRA (International Reading Association) and the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English). The fact is that there is considerable overlap in the membership of these two organizations, especially in their leadership. For example, American university professors of reading usually belong both to the IRA and the NCTE because the difference between them is a matter of focus, not rivalry, as the Bullock Committee erroneously supposes.

This is the most worrying aspect of the Bullock Report. All the good work this Committee has done on reading seems likely to be smothered by the woolly waffling from the same old dreary ' English ' departments. The effect may be something like handing over the training of pilots of jet airliners to the Geography department. Reading is a skill as is flying a plane. Skills require deliberate training and practice under the guidance of teachers who are experts in those skills.

In summary, the Bullock Report is a feast of information about good ways to help children develop into mature and effective readers, but its adherence to the traditional view of reading as merely one aspect of the subject of ' English ' seems likely to hamper or prevent any rapid growth of institutionalized means of improving reading standards in England.

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Early Reading

GEOFFREY ROBERTS

The purpose of a Committee of Inquiry is to report on the state of things as they are, and to make recommendations which will raise standards of practice. In its analysis of the state of current practice in teaching the early stages of reading, the Bullock Committee relied heavily upon a questionnaire which asked whether any of the following approaches were used: ' alphabetic analysis (letter names), look and say (word recognition), phonic 1 (letter sounds, diagraphs, diphthongs), phonic 2 (based on syllables), sentence method, pre-reading exercises (e.g. to establish left to right eye movement) '.

The replies to the questionnaire, as it was framed, merely showed that teachers were doing something that could be placed under one or more of six approaches, but gave no details of techniques, practices or sequence. The questionnaire also asked teachers to state how often they heard children read and whether phonic practice was given to overcome any difficulties which arose. Again we are told nothing about teaching techniques and nothing about the purposes for which teachers listen to children reading. Finally teachers were asked whether they used one or more sets of readers. Thus the answers to the questionnaire tell us that teachers use a mixture of approaches, that they listen to children read, and that some use one set of readers, some use more than one, and some do not use a set of graded readers. Hence, we cannot look to the Survey to find out what teachers regard as those practices which contribute to success or failure in teaching children to read. Therefore we must rely upon the Committee's interpretation of research reports and of the submissions of interested parties, and of its own observations of practice.

When considering the general discussion of the reading process in Chapter Six and of reading in the early years in Chapter Seven, it would help if we first defined what a new teacher entering an infant school would need to know about the

teaching of reading. She would need to know the elements of written English which are critical for decoding and interpretation, and she would have to consider the ability of the child to learn and process these elements. Her efficiency as a teacher of reading would obviously be enhanced if she knew something of the range of techniques by which she could introduce these elements in ways conducive to learning. She would need to consider the constraints imposed upon her teaching by the quality of the available published materials, the time at her disposal for preparation, and it is essential that she thinks critically and imaginatively about classroom organization.

On the elements of written English the teacher will learn a great deal from the Report. Its delineation is corroborated by a fair body of respectable research, although this research is not always acknowledged. Muehl (1960) demonstrated what many teachers have suspected, that children look at and use for matching purposes letters even before they can read, and Gibson *et al.* (1962) alerted us to the fact that we should not take it for granted that beginners will automatically perceive differences between letters unless they are taught to do so. The report emphasizes this and suggests, on pages eighty to eighty-four, work that can be done by the children in order to ensure adequate perception. The implication is that it is dangerous to pass over this essential point in the child's introduction to learning to read.

An equally important but frequently ignored point is that /di/–/m/ is a closer approximation to /dim/ than either /d/–/i/–/m/ or /d/–/im/, the former causing less distortion than either of the others. Many teachers who do not rely solely upon the device of contrasting words similar in some detail in order to teach children the basic elements of three letter words, would find the first way of splitting these words closer to the reality of word sounds, and thereby less open to the possibilities of mistaken identification.

However one does not have to study the elements of written English in any great depth to realize that the learners cannot rely for long on the simple expedient of recognizing a consonant plus vowel sound and adding on another consonant. So what strategies for word identification are we to teach the child? What combinations of letters should he look for? If he tries

to add up the five letter sounds in *bread*, or if, on the other hand, he divides *walked* into the syllables wal-ked, he will not get anywhere near the actual sound of the word. Many people have fallen into the trap of suggesting syllables as the significant unit for word identification, but Fernald (1943) and later Gibson *et al.* (1970) began to look a little more closely at this problem and both suggested that the reader should look for the pronounceable parts and spelling patterns of words. The Report clarifies the issue by stating that it is morphemes that are critical for word identification: *bask-et* and *hear-ing*, thus relating spelling and meaning rather than merely spelling and sound. If looked at in this way, the spelling system used in conventional orthography 'leads the reader directly to the meaning-bearing items' (Chomsky, 1970), and in addition to the short term effects of giving the child the extra lexical cue in his search for a meaningful response to a word, it also creates effective strategies for later word study.

As the child learns to look for particular forms of letter grouping, he will come to use the constraints of conventional orthography to predict with increasing precision the ensuing letters, and consequently he will be able to rely upon the use of fewer cues (i.e. he will not have to look at every letter) which will in turn increase the ease and rate with which he reads, leaving his mind free to deal with other matters concerned with the interpretation of a text.

The use of morphemic letter clusters has a direct bearing on whether or not to use i.t.a. although this is not stated in the Report. The arguments of Chomsky (1970) indicate that in terms of real understanding of the written code a strong argument can be made for retaining conventional orthography, whilst the research of Levin (1963) suggests that it would be a positive help if the child gradually acquired from the outset a set or disposition for dealing with the so-called irregularities of English. Both Gibson and Fernald also suggested that in looking at the letter within its morphemic setting, rather than as an independent isolated element, the degree of irregularity is reduced and the child is provided with a series of strategies in the form of looking for pronounceable meaningful units within unfamiliar words. It is a pity these potent arguments are not considered alongside the Report's example from Japan!

Admittedly, supporters of i.t.a. have other arguments, but these do not present the complete argument on which a final judgment by the teacher should be made. It is not good enough to argue the case for i.t.a., or any other code, on the basis that it provides an early start in reading; later attitudes to and understanding of language is a more fundamental issue than an early reading performance.

The new teacher would also need to consider prose and what is involved in its interpretation. On this matter the Report does not probe very deeply. It glosses over the problem of how far the language patterns of a text may deviate from the speech patterns of the child without causing the child undue difficulty, and it fails to consider whether some deviation is desirable as an introduction to different forms of expression. However, it does alert the teacher to the slow development of an understanding of the 'significant nuances of meaning' in texts, and to the various levels at which a text may be interpreted.

Unfortunately, the Report does not distinguish clearly between various developmental stages in the child's ability to interpret texts, and its emphasis on the reader's purpose as a factor in comprehension may be misleading. It surely is a factor in the case of skilled readers, but perhaps it would be more realistic in the first place to teach the child to understand what the author is saying. Too much licence for the reader during the early stages may lead him to misinterpret the passage. The major part of the reading of a five to eight year old is concerned with interpreting the author's message, and to require more than this may be beyond the powers of a child in or just emerging from the pre-operational period of thought.

Thus the teacher can expect to find a reasonably clear picture in the Report of the elements of written English which concern the learner. What he is not given is any criteria upon which to base his consideration of these elements other than linguistic criteria.

A major consideration for teachers in infant schools in Britain is the fact that children around the age of five or six tend to think in ways which differ from those of adults. They have a tendency to centre their thinking upon the thing which is occupying them at that moment; they tend to find it easier to place known facts together rather than to analyse the whole in

terms of its parts; they find it difficult to co-ordinate visual input, analysis, synthesis, and auditory output (Roberts, 1975); and they have only a gradually emerging awareness of the nature of written English (Reid, 1966) and little idea at the outset of what is required of them in reading. Furthermore, these children have difficulty in spelling and in the motor activity of handwriting. Thus it is essential that any method we use should:

(1) capitalise upon the child's propensity to concentrate exclusively upon his immediate interests by basing his reading materials upon his immediate actions or thoughts;

(2) give him all the facts he requires in order to synthesize sounds and words, and avoid analysis as specified by adults, thus allowing the child to witness the ways in which written language—words and texts—are constructed, reducing the complexity of the task in the early stages, and avoiding what can virtually become a test situation when a child is presented with a word and asked to read it.

Of all the published materials *Breakthrough to Literacy* meets the requirements of this model most adequately. It uses the child's spoken expression concerning his most immediate thoughts and actions; it enables the teacher to transpose these into a written code by selecting the words for the child, thus eliminating any chance of failure; and it enables the teacher, through discussion concerning the action, to alter the text and to demonstrate that written language is something that can be manipulated in order to relate form to meaning. From this the child will obtain glimpses of the nature of written language and he will begin to learn through participation. Learning through doing may be beyond the powers of the child at this stage, in the particular circumstances of beginning to learn to read, but participation can be controlled by the teacher and adjusted to the ability of the particular child or group of children.

As the child passes imperceptibly from a predominantly intuitive kind of thinking towards a more analytical approach, and acquires, with increasing facility, powers of composition, association, identity and reversibility, he will be able to participate in and finally carry out for himself a more rigorous analysis

of words. It is at this stage that the child should be required first to participate in seeking the morphemic units of words through specially prepared cluster cards, where the morphemes of a word are indicated in some way, and later to analyse words in this way on his own. The Report does not tell us that this essential part of teaching children to read—the identification of spelling patterns and their association with morphemes—has regrettably declined recently, possibly with the disappearance of such helpful aids as lists of word ' families '.

After considering the mental abilities of children, the teacher will be looking to the Report for guidance on teaching techniques. An interesting model for developing spoken language is given on page fifty-three. It consists of three parts: the teacher causes the child to reflect upon any approaching problem; she gives him guide lines for action; and then she allows him to make a decision. This falls neatly between the type of teaching that is usually required initially in any new task—i.e. the teacher completely controls the activity by doing the task himself whilst the child simply participates—and the teaching more suited to the later stages in any learning situation, where the child completely takes over the initiative, and the teacher then amends or adds to the child's response. This type of careful analysis of the techniques required by differing situations is essential, but unfortunately the Committee did not do this, perhaps because of the way in which it chose to analyse the skills involved in reading.

The classification of skills into primary and intermediate, as done in this Report, is acceptable in terms of linguistic analysis. It becomes confusing when translated into behavioural terms, for in these terms the perception of individual letters is a very different form of behaviour from the delineation of a spelling pattern connected with a morpheme within a word: to identify seven letters in the word *hearing* is one form of behaviour, but to identify the morpheme is another. And to identify the morphemes in a known word is very different from the identification of morphemes in an unfamiliar word. Similarly the identification of words in a passage is a different form of behaviour from the association of these words with one another and, by studying their juxtaposition, being able to derive a message from the text. In all three instances, the former

activity is the identification of a known fact whilst the latter activity is concerned with the processing of those facts—combining bits to form chunks (Miller, 1956).

Teachers will be well aware that these two distinct forms of behaviour demand very different teaching techniques. The facts must be taught and the child must be practised in them by one means or another until sufficient reinforcement has occurred to ensure that the child retains them in his long term memory store and his response to them is automatic. Needless to say the more imaginative the setting for this teaching and the more determined the effort to inculcate insight the greater its effect is likely to be. This leads to the second type of activity—the processing of facts. This presents much greater problem for the teacher, because it demands on the part of the learner a developing awareness of the ways in which the facts can be used and manipulated, and for the teacher the inculcation of this awareness presents numerous problems: she can demonstrate how she sees the facts and she can give a rough oral representation of how she processes them, but she will undoubtedly find it difficult to communicate such complex processes in an area where the learner has only a hazy notion of what is happening. The more she is able to base her teaching on actions—e.g. segments of word cards being placed together and many other actions of this kind—the more successful she is likely to be.

This is an area of teaching which requires much greater consideration than was apparently possible by the Committee of Inquiry. It could well form the basis for seminars and workshops, and the outcome would be of great benefit to teachers. The danger is that such seminars would fall into the same trap as the Committee of Inquiry and unwittingly concentrate upon the techniques for word identification to the virtual exclusion of the less well researched area of the skills involved in comprehension. Barrett (1972) has listed the various levels at which comprehension may occur; Roberts and Lunzer (1968) have suggested a model of the complete skill of reading; and Goodman (1967) has demonstrated ways in which sophisticated readers sometimes operate (needless to say, it would be quite wrong to assume that all adult sophisticated readers behave in an identical fashion regardless of the text and the purpose of reading; reading styles vary according to text and purpose).

The problem still to be worked out is how we can most effectively teach children to attain levels of sophisticated reading behaviour.

A start has been made and there are a few notable pieces of research. Weber (1970) has analyzed the oral reading errors of children who have just begun to read, and she has found evidence that they use their knowledge of grammar to narrow down the words that compete for a given place in a sentence, and this was so in the case of the weaker readers as well as the more able, the latter being slightly more consistent. Clay (1969) noted the self-corrective behaviour of five year olds, whilst Hochberg (1970) noted that younger children read texts, in which the spaces between the words were filled in, more easily than did older children, and this suggested to Levin and Kaplan (1970) that younger children tend to read word by word whilst older children look for larger units than words. These researches indicate that syntactic cues are being used in the early stages and they raise the problems of the size of the processing units which children at various stages in reading ability use when reading a text. The suggestion is that the size varies with the development of the reader, so the teacher will want to find ways of providing for this development.

The production of a programme of this nature would involve teaching that goes beyond the more simplified forms of ' hearing children read ', and it would demand the publication of reading books and reading schemes with different types of texts each containing a meaningful sequence of ideas, so that the child has some chance of processing what he has read and anticipating what is still to come. Chomsky (1972) significantly points out that ' the variety of linguistic material that the child is still learning on his own during the elementray school years must certainly be extensive '. She recommends exposure to a rich variety of language inputs in interesting, stimulating situations, and she suggests that we might do the same with reading. It is a pity that the Report did not make more specific detailed recommendations of ways in which this could be done during the early period of reading.

In its discussion of reading schemes the Report points to the weaknesses within the reading books: the lack of any effective framework for the systematic development of word analysis

and word identification; the lack of sequence and logical development in the text; the ill-thought out use of illustrations, many of which may distract rather than aid the child in his reading, and the paucity of ideas and their irrelevance to many children. However, the discussion is so convoluted that the reader is left with a general idea that all is not well, but with no clearly enunciated picture of what should be done about it.

Finally the problem which perhaps worries young entrants to teaching more than any other is the organization of reading activities within the classroom. Perhaps the Report could have dealt with this in stronger terms than it does. Surely now was the time to destroy the myth that one person can teach more than a very small group—say three or four children—at any one time. Even such a small group is rarely homogeneous in terms of stage of progress and personal need (this has long been accepted in the teaching of mathematics). Thus it would have prepared young teachers for the reality of the classroom to be told how necessary it is for them to plan the work so that at any particular time, when she wishes to teach reading, the majority of the class will be engaged in other activities which do not require the direct and immediate attention of the teacher. Hence she must be willing to plan, to prepare, and to use a range of resources—activities, games, work cards, assignments—which will make this type of organization feasible.

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry raises many issues with which the teacher of infants is grappling. It gives a clear picture of the elements involved in word recognition, but it fails to examine the child's capacity to deal with these elements. Furthermore, although various teaching techniques are suggested, they are presented in such a diffuse way that no coherent programme emerges, and this deficiency is all the more serious because the reader of the Report is not given a clear theoretical model upon which to construct a practical programme for teaching children during the initial stages.

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Reading in the later years

JOYCE M. MORRIS

> As is so often our British way, Whitehall has wheeled out impressive-sounding artillery—an ex-vice-chancellor of Oxford, a 600-page report, three years of deliberations—to confirm the impressions of common sense. (*Daily Telegraph* editorial, 19th February, 1975.)

While skimming through what the newspapers had to say about *A language for life*, the above comment caught my eye. Its satirical intent back-fired because 'impressive-sounding artillery' is surely needed if the battle for a literate Britain is to be won. There is also good reason to rejoice that the Bullock Report places a high premium on common sense and, by its sheer size and scope, virtually ensures that much of the prevalent nonsense about reading and the related language arts will soon be laid to rest. Moreover, the mere fact that such an authoritative publication focuses widespread attention on the fundamental role of language in education and life itself, will greatly help to eradicate the lip-service hitherto often paid to this vital truth when it comes to such matters as teacher-training, research grants and resources for schools.

Clearly, the Bullock Committee was very much aware of current misunderstandings about the various aspects of English; in particular, those concomitant with the trend away from traditional school curricula towards the broader objectives of thematic work, personal development and social integration. Evidence for this lies, for instance, in the Report's emphasis on knowledge culled from relevant academic disciplines to highlight the nature of the learning/teaching task with regard to reading and the use of English. What is more, a nice balance is achieved between (1) 'irrefutable facts' about the language and linguistic processes, and (2) 'expert opinions' on such controversial issues as methods, materials, media, mixed-ability grouping and other types of organization.

One of the most important facts underlined in the Report is that reading is a developmental process involving the mastery of a hierarchy of increasingly complex, interrelated skills from pre-school to university level inclusive. Stress is also laid on the fact that, to develop these skills successfully, the majority of pupils require explicit instruction from expert teachers throughout their school careers. Accordingly, the Report dispatches a previously persistent fallacy that the teaching of reading is the sole responsibility of teachers in charge of infants and/or older backward readers. In other words, it effectively revives the old maxim that, virtually, ' every teacher is or should be a teacher of reading '.

Reading in the later years naturally includes the consolidation of skills acquired in the infant school, and systematic diagnostic instruction for pupils who failed initially to make satisfactory progress. However, it is not these tasks with which my assigned chapters (eight, nine and twelve) are mainly concerned. So, it is perhaps sufficient to note that, if all the recommendations for the early years are implemented, a much smaller proportion of future generations will require remedial treatment. This, in turn, will generally allow teachers in middle and secondary schools to concentrate more time and effort on the tasks detailed as their prime responsibility.

The nature and extent of this responsibility, according to the Report, will doubtless come as a surprise to many teachers of older children. This is especially likely in the case of specialist teachers who ' generally believe that pupils need only to be fluent readers to cope with the reading demands of their subjects '. Whereas, in fact, there are specific reading techniques for improving learning efficiency in the content fields which subject teachers should help their pupils to acquire.

These techniques are adequately described as, indeed, are all the main skills and strategies needed to cope with the reading demands of school and adult life. The basic problem is, of course, how best to achieve the necessary extension of the pupils' reading from the general to the more specialised, with a continuing emphasis on reading for pleasure and personal development. Here the Bullock Committee appears to have been strongly influenced by the observations made by three of its members during their short study tour of North America.

First, the question of time-tabling special periods for extending reading skills was considered and finally rejected in favour of carrying out this important task in and through normal learning activities. This was largely because observations in American High School grades indicated that, on the whole, the advantages of such periods in terms of concentrated attention are outweighed by the disadvantages; for instance, by an inherent, adverse tendency to cause a sharp ' vertical split ' between Reading and English, and to have lessons containing ' decontextualised ' vocabulary work in lieu of ' reading within subjects '.

Next, the Committee of Inquiry examined the possibility that commercially-produced programmes of the kind usually called ' reading workshop ' or ' reading laboratory ' might provide ready-made routes to the development of reading skills. This led to the conclusion that, although such programmes have some value, the strong motivation needed to bring about real and lasting gains in reading ability is more likely to come from the wide-ranging opportunities of the curriculum. Moreover, virtually the same conclusion, for similar reasons, was reached with regard to comprehension exercises in English text-books and various kinds of kits.

In effect, by advocating the development of reading skills in and through normal curriculum activities, the Committee makes almost all teachers responsible for a vital task which it recognizes the majority have not been specifically trained to execute. Accordingly, the Report includes a number of recommendations which, if carried out, should ease though not fully rectify this situation. For example, it recommends that, in every school, there should be at least one member of staff with advanced qualifications in reading who, *ipso facto*, can advise and support colleagues in their teaching of reading. Every school should also have an ' organised policy for language across the curriculum, establishing every teacher's involvement in language and reading development throughout the years of schooling '.

The Report offers several suggestions as to who should take the lead in this policy of corporate responsibility, which is somewhat revolutionary bearing in mind the traditional autonomy of British teachers. However, it is clear that, at the secondary stage, the favourite is the head of English as opposed to the

reading specialist despite his or her having an understanding of skills which goes ' far beyond that possessed by the subject teacher or, for that matter, by most teachers of English '.

As yet, reading specialists are a comparatively rare phenomenon in Britain. So perhaps this preference is understandable and, after all, heads of English have usually graduated in their subject. Moreover, their specialised knowledge of literature is concerned with language in its most complex and varied forms.

Be that as it may, teachers of English need to acquire an extensive knowledge of children's literature which is not normally covered in degree courses. According to the Report they should also keep abreast of good modern fiction and new poetry. However, as the annual amount published makes this difficult, a team approach is recommended with teachers sharing responsibility for the provision of books and the building up of a collection of poetry, not only in printed form but on tape, cassette and disc.

The Report draws attention to the fact that the narrative mode provides children of all ages with the strongest motivation to read books. Yet, in most primary schools, narrative books are substantially outnumbered by non-fiction owing to an increased emphasis on learning through discovery and personal interests. Moreover, modern theories about ' relevance ' in terms of children's first-hand experience have tended to obscure the equally important role of fantasy in their lives. To make amends, therefore, the Report recommends that primary schools should increase their supply of narrative books, and include therein a fair proportion of fairy and folk tales.

Innovations in secondary schools are also critically examined, but in this case mainly with a view to their effects on standards of English. Stress is laid on the importance of involving an English specialist in the detailed planning of a humanities or integrated studies programme. Continuous consultation must follow, as professional knowledge of suitable texts, is absolutely essential to ensure that, within the larger context of thematic work, English teaching is maintained at the highest level and the pupils' experience of literature is extended.

Obviously, standards must be assessed, but the Committee is concerned that the demands of examinations should not distort

literature teaching by confining the experience of pupils to summaries, model answers and stereotyped commentaries. It also believes that 'two factors—teacher influence and book provision—hold the key to an improvement in reading standards in the junior and secondary years'. This is because reading attainment and voluntary reading are closely associated, and there is evidence that, when these two factors of influence and provision are in effective combined operation, children increase the amount and range of their voluntary reading despite the influence of homes where reading has no status and books no place. In other words, contrary to current propaganda about the futility of compensatory education, schools can and do make a big difference where there are knowledgeable, skilled, enthusiastic teachers able to provide pupils with the right books at the right time and in the right place.

Thus, *A language for life* endorses the power of the teacher to make reading in the later years of schooling a pleasureable, enriching experience in which essential skills are successfully developed for life-long purposes. At the same time, it catalogues the kinds of knowledge, expertise and attitude which are the true source of that power. By doing so, it highlights how dangerously nonsensical are the popular assumptions that (1) any teacher can turn his or her hand to English, and (2) anybody who can read can *ipso facto* teach reading. In other words we now have a government-sponsored document which, at long last, puts common sense and professionalism at the head of the forces battling for a literate Britain.

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Language and talk

ASHER CASHDAN

Talking and listening are activities which we all engage in, from early childhood right through schooling and in adult life. Reading, like it or not, is often a minority pursuit and certainly occupies less of most people's time. So it is natural that the Bullock Committee should have made a point of discussing both the child's language development and the use of oral language in school in their own right, as well as for their relevance to reading and written work.

As my contribution to this symposium, then, I propose to consider those parts of the Report which are concerned with language development in the home, with early schooling and with oral work right through into the Secondary School. These issues are even more related than they look at first sight. The Report itself stresses the continuity of development and learning; there can be little doubt that the language the child learns at home and even more, the way he learns to use it, is highly relevant to his skills and attitudes at school right through into higher education. As with all basic processes, what happens at each stage affects each successive later stage, whether to facilitate or hinder, to open out possibilities or close them down. We shall be concerned, then, mainly with Chapters Five and Ten in the Report, both reminding the reader of what is said and making comments where extension seems useful or doubts have to be expressed.

No-one doubts now that parents play a crucial role in their children's language development and hence in their ' educability '. The child learns his language from those competent speakers who are in frequent interaction with him—in nearly all cases, his parents. Parents' language habits and skills obviously vary widely, so it is not surprising that we look for differences here to help us account for the wide range of language skills the five-year old can bring to school with him. The ' disadvantaged ' child is considered by most people nowadays to bring less

language and a more restricted code with him. But this position has not gone entirely unchallenged. The writers of the Report show their awareness both of Bernstein's earlier analysis and its limitations and of the work of socio-linguists such as William Labov. What this amounts to is an acknowledgement that the child's language may be restricted more in performance than in basic competence. In other words, the sheer amount of language experience which the child needs to become a competent speaker of his own language may be less than we have sometimes thought. The problems may often lie rather more with the uses to which he habitually puts the language he in fact possesses. Furthermore, he may need to learn what the school requires of him; if this learning does not take place in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance, many such children will ' tune out '. In this light, the Report does not make it clear enough that what parents need to do is not to provide their children with more language ' tuition ', such as expansion of their utterances, but rather that they need a broader approach to language use, and more help in providing their children with meaningful expectations of school. And of course, parents can only have these if they themselves have proper contact with the schools.

Four main suggestions are made for helping parents to fill their role more adequately. Secondary pupils should learn about child development, by concrete practice, not just through academic courses of study. This means beginning to train parents-to-be while they are still at school themselves—an excellent proposal, which should fit in with many secondary schools' current search for meaningful components of ROSLA courses. The second and third points in the plan are work with parents in the antenatal clinic and the provision of useful programmes on radio and television to deepen their understanding of the child's psychological development and how they can help with it. These will both be difficult to implement. They call for extra resources and changes in attitude and responsibility within both medical and ancillary professions as well as on the broadcasters' behalf. Parents would also have to be helped to see that what they were being given was not just entertainment, but something in which they could really become involved.

Fourthly, the Report sets out and endorses some of the newer home visiting schemes, such as the West Riding study reported

in the EPA projects in which parents were brought into the picture not just in discussing their children, but in their actual education in the home. Further development of such schemes, using sensitive and well-prepared teachers, both visiting the homes and bringing parents and children into nursery and infant schools for educational, not just social purposes, seems one of the most promising developments we could now have.

Focussing now on experience within the school itself, the Report goes on to praise the integration of experience and language which takes place in the best Nursery and Infant Schools. It then proceeds to consider the use of formal ' language programmes ' to improve the language and thinking of the disadvantaged child. There are two problems here; on the one hand this now involves us in accepting that there are children without adequate language, though we have just discussed doubts about such an acceptance. On the other there is the problem of whether the structured programme, even if good in its own right, can prove acceptable to the traditional British teacher of young children, whose whole approach is founded on spontaneous and flexible reaction to the needs of the individual child. Somewhat weakly, the Report is not even willing to endorse wholeheartedly the teacher's use of a checklist or skills inventory simply to monitor what she is doing with each child. But there is a much more positive insistence on the need to provide extra classroom help for the teacher, both in the shape of effectively trained aides and in the bringing in of parents to do meaningful work in the classroom itself. This would make possible much more one-to-one work, as well as revolutionizing the relationship between teacher and parent. The Report makes no secret of the extra needs in the way of staffing and accommodation that such practices will create. But the results could be very considerable: it is to be hoped that teachers will see such developments, not as a threat, but as a considerable strengthening of their professional position.

Talk in school next comes in for substantial consideration in Chapter Ten, in the Middle and Secondary School context. As the Report points out, in too many schools this means teacher talk. Unfortunately, though this is rather glossed over, the position is not that different in many Primary Schools. But the impact for the pupil may well be particularly strong when

he enters secondary education. For the voices which talk at him are many and the situations often insecure. When he is invited to speak, it is almost always to answer a question and to have his answer immediately evaluated—accepted or rejected—according to how closely the pupil has divined what was in the teacher's mind. But as the Report stresses, pupils learn not just by doing, but by talking through. Little is learned, particularly in the whole class situation, when the teacher talks at the pupils. There is an illuminating discussion of how pupils may learn in large or smaller groups and of their need for exploratory talk, often with no teacher present at all, so that pupils can relax in their peer situation, working things out with their fellows. The teacher must accept the pupil's accent and language; he must also be wary of asking for standards of grammar and diction which are not appropriate, particularly in speech as opposed to writing. This exploratory language work may come more naturally to the middle-class child than to those who have been brought up to accept the authoritarian teacher (even if they rebel against him); they may need particular help in making this transition.

Listening is also emphasized as a skill one acquires in context and not in response to exercises of inevitably dubious generalization. This brings one naturally to the consideration of examining oral language. The Report is not wholehearted here. The artificiality and unreliability of such examinations and their attendant syllabi is indeed a problem. This is one that few examinations entirely escape, but it is a particularly sensitive issue in this area and it may well be that we have not yet either the techniques or, let it be said, the agreement upon aims to go much further into oral language examining for the present.

The discussion of oral language concludes with some consideration of drama. Great stress is laid on the role of improvisation as a language technique, of far more significance and applicability than formal ' theatre ', even if the latter has its place. Different forms of organization are discussed, ranging from the separate drama department to the integration of dramatic work with English. But in any case, surely all who teach English seriously should have some training and commitment to improvisatory work.

Drama, as the Report points out, is not just about language, however. There are important nonverbal communicatory aspects, physical, social and personal. This is well worth saying, not just in connection with drama, but à propos the whole issue of language and talk in school. The Bullock Report may be about 'reading and the uses of English'; its writers have tried hard not to move too far outside their remit. But, at every point, one becomes aware that the issues raised are inevitably—and rightly—much broader. The area for debate cannot therefore be confined to how we are to improve our educational system in these areas. Our real agenda is the role and functioning of the whole of our contemporary educational and social system.

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Linguistic perspectives

DAVID CRYSTAL

To begin anecdotally: in 1970 I was asked to address many audiences of teachers on aspects of the subject of language—its nature, functions, role in society, and so on; in 1974 I had similar lecturing commitments, but this time I was invariably asked to speak to a title involving the subject of linguistics. The shift is significant: it is a sign of developing awareness. Most audiences, these days, do not seem to feel a need to be informed about general principles to do with the importance of language and why it needs to be scientifically studied; their interest has become more specialized and professional; there is a greater concern for information about how to get to grips with language, about matters of technique and analysis. Now perhaps lecture audiences, or my experiences of them, may be atypical. I am ready to be persuaded that the collective wisdom of this Committee is correct in aiming their Report at the first of my two kinds of audience. My concern is that there is little in the Report which will satisfy the needs of the second.

Most of the general principles involved in the scientific study of language in educational settings are well represented (such as the need to judge language in terms of notions of appropriateness rather than correctness (p. 143), the avoidance of prescriptivism (p. 169), the importance of seeing language in its situational context (p. 157), the conditioning role of teachers' language (p. 142), or the fundamental differences between speech and writing (p. 143)); and it is good to have these principles, and their associated aims, set down with clarity and emphasis. But for the teacher who wants specific guidelines about how to put these principles into practice, about how to achieve these aims, there is little help. How does one bridge the gap between theoretical principles and pedagogic practice, in this matter of language? A basic weakness of the Report is that it does not address itself sufficiently to this problem—nor even seem aware of the major difficulties, both theoretical and

practical, which lie in the way of anyone trying to construct such a bridge. The point may be illustrated by taking two instances of bridges that need building, both of which involve the teacher in confusing and apparently paradoxical situations: one concerns the relationship between the conception of language as speech and as writing; the other involves the notions of linguistic form and linguistic function.

The speech/writing paradox

The danger here is of presenting the teacher with two contradictory principles, both of which he is expected to implement. The first line of reasoning contributing to this situation may be illustrated from page ninety-two:

> a printed text is easier to read the more closely its structures are related to those used by the reader in normal speech. . . . Reading material which presents children with . . . unreal language therefore lacks predictability and prevents them from making use of the sequential probability in linguistic structure.
>
> And again from page 105:
>
> Unless there is a close match between the syntactic features of the text and the syntactic expectancies of the reader there will be a brake on the development of word identification.

A correct and much-needed emphasis, in my opinion. The second line of reasoning, however, is illustrated on page 143 (my italics): ' not enough account is taken of the *fundamental* differences that exist between speech and writing '. (The point is made in the context of discussing oral language in the middle years, but its general applicability can be illustrated from elsewhere in the Report, and its emphasis I also consider correct.) But how *does* one make a ' close match ' between two phenomena whose differences are fundamental? How in fact can ' the spoken word . . . mediate the written ' (p. 63)? What counts as ' close '? What features of the one medium are dispensable when ' translating ' into the other? On what principles does one decide? This must not be done unconsciously, randomly, impressionistically, one must remember: the aim is ' a conscious policy for language development ' (p. 73); the teacher must take ' deliberate measures ' to improve linguistic ability (p. 169).

I do not know whether there is a clear solution to this problem, but it is sufficiently basic to warrant extensive discussion

in any report. It should be pointed out, for example, that there have been few attempts to produce reading materials reflecting the syntax of conversational speech (the variety which, before the child gets to school, presumably provides the basis for any concept of structural expectancy); and those which have emerged are in fact far removed from the reality of informal speech (with its loose structuring, anacolutha, elliptical sentences, intonational focussing, and work order variation). They are, inevitably, stereotypes (see further, Crystal and Davy, 1975). It is of course most unlikely that one would *want* written material reflecting this kind of English: to produce readers that accurately reflected the syntax of speech would presumably be a bizarre confusion of aims. The functions of speech are different from those of writing, and the differences in syntax are in part a reflection of this. But if one does not want to negate the speech/writing distinction, but simply to take account of it, then the question remains: How is this to be done? Which features of speech can be omitted, which reflected, and why? It is a question that has to be answered, and therefore it ought to be asked. Moreover, it raises other issues. For example, imagine an ideal situation in which we have available an inventory of all the syntactic patterns of typical five year olds, statistically grouped, socio-economically graded, and so on, and in addition a set of reading materials which selected its structures solely from this list in some principled way, to preserve parallelisms wherever possible: would this situation—at present quite fictitious—resolve the paradox for us? Would the bridge have been built? Far from it. Because a child has a structure in his speech/hearing 'competence', and is presented with the same structure visually, does not mean to say that he can or will make the identification for himself which adults make. We may assume, if we wish, that he does make the link, but this would be an unwarranted deduction, and runs counter to the evidence of the mis-identifications children come out with in reading aloud, e.g. reading a question as if it were a statement. Presumably the teacher, or the provider of reading materials, must bring the process of identification to the surface, focussing on it explicitly. But techniques of doing this have received little discussion (though this is one of the aims of Bevington and Crystal, 1975).

The form/function paradox

There is a perfectly proper emphasis in this Report on language functions, and indeed it is here where the Committee thinks the influence of linguistics primarily lies: ' the influence linguistics can exercise upon schools lies in (the) concept of the inseparability of language and the human situation ' (p. 174). The point is illustrated at various places with reference to some of the main uses of language. They then refer with favour to someone's view that formal knowledge of language is unnecessary: ' Is there anyone here who truly believes that it matters to anyone but a grammarian how you define a noun, or what the transformational rules are for forming the passive voice . . .? ' (p. 174). In the face of all this rhetoric, it can only be with a small voice that I answer ' Yes '. Leaving aside the choice of examples, the polarization being forced upon us is that of function versus form. The point which must be quickly made, however, is that not only is this rigid distinction an unnecessary distortion of the nature of language, the need for formal work on language is in fact *unavoidable*, if there is to be any systematic application of the linguistic recommendations of the Report. An awareness of the functional meaning of that opaque phrase ' how language works ' is of little value without a corresponding awareness of the formal structure of language. Let us look at some of the arguments.

I accept, with the Committee, that the proper way to introduce systematic ideas about language is through the *use* of language. No linguist that I know in this country would advocate the resuscitation of traditional grammar-teaching in a modern, e.g. transformational guide, and I look with horror on the attempts to do just that in the United States. I therefore agree with the four stages introduced on page 162: (1) the learning of language comes from using and interrelating its different modes in various situations; (2) curiosity about language (e.g. about usage) may lead to *ad hoc* experiment and enquiry into the phenomenon; (3) systematic studies may then emerge, to develop the child's awareness of principles ' that may affect his understanding of himself and other people, rather than in any direct effect upon his language performance '; (4) explicit rules may then be introduced, which will enable the child to solve particular problems or help him to re-analyse linguistic

situations. Once again we have a principle, which has to be put into practice by the teacher—again, we must remember, in a conscious, controlled way. But what knowledge must the teacher have in order to implement these directives? The concepts of use and comprehension involved are very complex, susceptible to various interpretations, and giving rise to major problems in assessment. As an example of the latter, given two children engaging in a ' use ' of language, how is one to judge their relative success, or influence the less successful to improve? Apart from any pedagogical problems, the teacher must carry out at least four preliminary tasks: (1) identify the difference between the two, i.e. determine which features of language account for their differing performance—for which he needs an awareness of language structure in general, a knowledge of some classificatory terminology, and a sense of the possible qualitative and quantitative variations affecting performance (in order to answer the question ' *How* different? '); (2) he must be clear as to the salient linguistic characteristics of a ' good ' example of the language use being aimed for; (3) once he has made a diagnosis, he must be aware of the possible linguistic pathways towards achieving this use of language which will affect decisions about teaching policy, e.g. whether he should build up a use of language in some graded, structured way; and (4) having decided to implement a particular line of action, he needs to be able to identify progress—which amongst other things involves an ability to identify unexpected or misleading linguistic developments, such as the emergence of a structure which in fact militates against the development of the target use of language. In other words, the teacher must have some formal knowledge of language structure; and if he is not going to memorize examples of ' good ' uses of language from every possible situation, sooner or later he must learn some general rules about the nature of formal language variation, and the use made of this in social contexts, e.g. types of pronunciation contrastivity, the limits of permitted word order variation, restrictions on the generality of rules (e.g. how widely used *is* the passive, and with which kinds of verbs?). Ultimately, this cannot be avoided, and the more systematically the teacher can be introduced to these problems the better. It simply will not do to imply that formal

knowledge about language is unnecessary, or that it can be casually picked up as the days go by, or that there are no problems in applying the information. I have made this point before, in relation to such schemes as *Language in Use* (Crystal, 1973). This scheme is cited in this Report also (p. 175), and the Committee adds: ' It is, of course, up to the individual teacher to add to the assignments in each unit, or to omit from them what does not suit his purpose '. But in discussions I have had with teachers who have tried to do this, it is precisely here that they find greatest difficulty, because they lack any formal training in how to extrapolate from the samples given, and how to evaluate what to reinforce or omit. The Report draws a comparison between studying ' specimens ' of language and geographical or botanical field work; but where is the equivalent of the botanist's formal training here? The cautionary note on page 340 is timely, but does not seem to have had any effect on the overall tone of the Report: ' Sociological or psychological approaches to the study of language are invaluable, but only if language *as well as* social structure is studied, if language *as well as* developmental psychology is studied '.

Exactly the same point arises in relation to the criteria for maturity in writing (p. 39), where the logic of the four-step argument is distinctly odd: (1) there are many variables in deciding this; (2) numerical concepts, especially length, are inadequate; (3) no ' simple measure ' is enough; (4) therefore, we must assess maturity in terms of stylistic range. The illogic is in the jump from (3) to (4). The examples the Report gives (such as T-unit length) are indeed simple—naïve, some would say. It is perfectly possible to conceive of more complex accounts of linguistic structure, referring to the full qualitative range of structures that may turn up in a text: in principle, these need be no less comprehensive than those which have been used for some years in literary and general stylistics (see, e.g. Crystal and Davy 1969, Turner 1973). But the *possibility* of using such measures should not be ruled out. An alternative to (4) is to develop better formal measures. And when one considers what the use of monitored styles (narrative, autobiography, etc. are cited) would mean, the *necessity* of referring to formal language patterns rapidly emerges. For the teacher

still has to judge the relative success of his pupils in achieving a narrative (etc.) style, and this will require reference to specific features of language. Once again, a bridge has to be built, if any objectivity, system or precision is to be achieved. To insist on language functions without a corresponding insistence on language forms is to present the teacher with another paradoxical situation.

The complexity of language

We may regard these problems as aspects of a more fundamental malaise in the Report, namely, a tendency to underestimate the range and complexity of certain area of contemporary research, and a corresponding tendency to overestimate the importance of certain trends and approaches in the study of language in education. A parochial impression is indefensible in a work which claims to consider ' all aspects of the teaching the use of English ' (xxxi); but a sense of comprehensive coverage is what one certainly does *not* end up with, at least as regards the linguistic aspects of the Report. Two examples must suffice of the way in which the Report underestimates the complexity of language, despite many (much-needed) affirmations that it will not: one from socio-linguistics, one from psycho-linguistics.

Concerning the former, the Report's emphasis on language functions is to be applauded, but it would be wrong to assume that its views are representative of the field. One could be forgiven, for example, for thinking that Bernstein's ' elaborated/restricted ' distinction is generally accepted, with the views of its critics not worthy of consideration because they have ' often misinterpreted ' it (p. 52); or that the six-line dismissal of the work of Labov and others as a ' sincerely held view ' capable of acting only as a ' necessary corrective ' (p. 54) is an adequate reference (to what is after all the most influential movement in contemporary socio-linguistics); or, as a third example, that the triadic model of language functions as expressive/poetic/transactional is a generally accepted socio-linguistic fact, the outcome of empirical analysis of language features. For (to take this last case as typical), no allusion is made to the problems one encounters in trying to make formal sense of the notion of *continua* that relate expressive to poetic, and expressive to transactional functions; nor to the total absence of psycho-

linguistic support for the claim that notions such as explicitness and accuracy in writing correlate with increasing awareness of personal role (p. 165). Or again, the Report advocates ' planned intervention in the child's language development ' (p. 67); this being glossed as an ' effective record ' of language uses: eleven of these are then listed (largely corresponding to the set used by Tough), and one is given the impression that this list is complete. But there is much selectivity and strange emphasis in the list: one function of language, it seems, is for ' expressing and recognising tentativeness '—though it is unclear why this variable is singled out at the expense of such other social psychological functions as dominance or solidarity; and well-recognized functions of language, such as phatic communion, are not listed at all. Indeed, throughout the discussion of the theme that absolute standards of correctness are to be replaced by relative notions of appropriateness (e.g. p. 143), one gets the impression that while paying lip-service to the modern emphases, deep down the Committee is reluctant to follow the implications of this switch completely through. Every now and again there are telling phases, such as ' One may regret some of the changes (in language over the years), which can deprive the language of valuable distinctions ' (p. 170), or ' avoiding breaches of the accepted norms of standard English . . . is by common consent held to be important ' (p. 40). How common this consent is, in fact, depends of course on how the term ' standard ' is defined, and this the Report does not do. The real problem is here being neatly side-stepped. It is particularly evident on page 153: ' regional speech will not be penalised as long as it is clearly understandable '. But to whom? Who is qualified to judge regional speech, accents, and the whole question of appropriateness? What are the criteria? About such matters, however—well-discussed in the last five years by such scholars as Labov, Giles and Trudgill—the Report is silent.

The best example of inadequate psycho-linguistic discussion is in relation to the thought/language controversy, which is, one supposes, as fundamental to the subject-matter of this Report as anything might be, and yet it is dismissed summarily (' there is no need to enter this controversy . . . ' (p. 49)). But despite not having gone into the various arguments, immediate

support is then given to one of them, Chomsky's: ' The plausibility of this claim (that language and thinking are closely interdependent) has been greatly strengthened . . . by the work of Chomsky . . . in attempting to discover structural features to be found in all languages ' (p. 49). The Report gives no sense of the theoretical one-sidedness of this view, and does not see fit to mention work based on other assumptions—Piaget's, for instance. But it must not be forgotten that the Chomsky claim is hypothesis, not fact (and how does a hypothesis ' strengthen plausibility '?), and moreover a hypothesis whose formulation is of such a kind that its amenability to falsification is very much in doubt.

The whole field of language acquisition is also given short shrift—again an odd emphasis for a Report which is arguing for the integration of reading within language development as a whole. Chapter Five begins with the aim ' to review what is known about the way in which a child acquires language and the forces governing how it develops ' (p. 51). 500 words later, the Report moves on to socio-economic variation. Systematic work in child language has been in progress since the early 1960s, and has indeed a great deal to offer, in terms of empirical findings, methodology, and theoretical explanation (as a glance at any number of the *Journal of Child Language* would show); but no sense of this comes across from the stereotype presented here. And I am shocked by the naïvety of what *is* presented, e.g. the view that ' mastery of morphological rules comes later than . . . command of syntax ' (p. 52), that ' when the child produces his short sentence he puts them in an order which is syntactically correct ' (p. 51) (a claim which is statistically debatable, and probably circular—adult interpretations are an inadequate basis for judgments about children's syntactic knowledge). Particular examples of the neglect in dealing with this whole field would be: work on the development of syntax after age five (e.g. Carol Chomsky's—to be compared with the Report's emphasis that the learning of speech is ' substantially completed ' before five (p. 188); semantic development generally (e.g. the work of Eve Clark, or the Edinburgh research into comprehension); the complex field of phonemic acquisition (Jakobson, Fry, and others). Vague generalities, such as ' language competence grows incrementally ' (p. 7, p. 515) (a phrase which I

find completely obscure, incidentally), are no substitute for empirical detail, or for direct discussion of central theoretical issues, such as the crucial question of critical periods (e.g. when does the acquisition of syntax stop?), or explanation for language learning. The Report is in fact equivocal about the nature of language learning. Most of its comments on the point do seem to suggest that language acquisition is viewed as an ordered, systematic enterprise: how can any assessment of remediation be provided if this assumption is not made? On the other hand, ' children learn to master their mother tongue at individual rates and by individual routes ' (p. 206). Again, there is much recent discussion in the language acquisition literature that could be referred to for clarification of this issue. But regrettably, in this general area, the Report does not live up to its own recommendation that teachers ' must have an up to date knowledge of language development ' (p. 57).

The unreality of the Report's attitude to the complexity of language comes out most clearly, however, in the sections on teacher training. The teacher is expected to ' chart the process ' of language development (p. 67). He must plan the situations ' from which such uses are bound to emerge ' (p. 68) and must therefore ' have a knowledge of how language works, and the ability to appraise children's language and operate upon it accordingly ' (p. 68; and cf. p. 215, where this appraisal is needed to preserve continuity between schools). Again, teachers ' ought to ensure that in a given period of time pupils cover certain features of language ' (p. 172), perhaps by using a check-list.[1] They need ' a knowledge of the modest collection of technical terms useful for discussion of language ' (p. 172). ' A careful record should be kept of their (children's) progress ' (p. 520). Careful observation and recording is essential in the screening and diagnosis of language difficulty (p. 247). ' The particular nature of each child's difficulties must be seen in relation to his whole linguistic development ' (p. 271). ' The language development of young children should be set in the wider context of the language human beings use ' (p. 55). Teachers need ' an *explicit* understanding of the nature of spoken language ' (p. 144, my italics). All of this is certainly a massive ' new dimension ' (p. 68) for the teacher. It is indeed ' asking a great deal ' (p. 68). And three obvious questions arise:

(1) is there time to cover this ground, in teacher training? (2) is there time to put these principles into practice, routinely, in the classroom situation as we have it at the moment? (3) how does one train these transcriptional, analytic, theoretical and other abilities? I feel able to comment only on the last question. It is *not* the case that these skills can be grafted on in a matter of hours or weeks: it requires a rigorous and systematic component of training, as University courses in linguistics have indicated. It is not something to which the nursery nurse (p. 68) or the health visitor (p. 248) can make much of a contribution (despite the Report's hopes), except in a very general and preliminary way. Not only is a ' modest command of terms ' needed; a whole way of thinking systematically about language may need to be instilled. And this takes time to be expounded, digested, and accepted. It is indeed ' a more complex matter than is often realized ' (p. 73).

This is, one imagines, where linguistics would have some role to play, as one of the foundations of the *whole* enterprise (cf. its recognizably fundamental status in the report on *Speech Therapy Services*, 1972). It is therefore not a little surprising to find linguistics tucked away in Chapten Eleven, on ' Written Language '. It is here, for instance, that we are told: ' We regard the distinction between *use* and *study* as crucial to any discussion of the place of language in the curriculum '. Is this then reason for introducing it on page 162? Is it not a point that applies *a fortiori* to oral language, language in the early years, and many of the other earlier chapters of the Report? Or again, if check-lists are to be used in establishing ' developmental profiles ' (p. 217), then there must be ' a good deal of preparatory activity on the part of teachers, advisers, and educational psychologists ' (p. 248). But not linguists? And yet, apart from any general role which linguists might have, there are many specific tasks which cannot be adequately handled without linguistic techniques, e.g. in the transcription of speech (as in the context of improvised drama, where the lack of materials is commented upon, p. 159), in contrastive analysis (mentioned in relation to immigrants, p. 287), in the analysis of data, and so on—over and above the specific applications which stem from techniques in socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics.

The Report tells us that linguistics has a broad contribution to make (p. 88), and frequently makes points involving technicalities that only a linguistic perspective can elucidate (e.g. references to phonemics, morphemics, paralanguage). One could go on to say that before the teaching aspects of this area can be assessed, it is prerequisite to develop an awareness of at least three areas of linguistic expertise: (1) the nature of the English language—or at least, of the major theoretical issues encountered in its study; (2) the use to which English is put, with reference to socio- and psycho-linguistic considerations in particular; and (3) because we are dealing in large part with language differentials, the construction of comparative frameworks, in order to assess change, strength, or deviance in language structure and use. In the light of these apparently central factors, one might have taken it for granted that membership of the Committee would have included at least one full-time English language specialist, one sociologist, one psycho-linguist (with a particular interest in language acquisition), and perhaps a general linguist too. Or at least *one* individual with a recognized reputation in some sub-set of these fields. But there was no-one. (It did seem to strike the Committee as a lacuna in due course, if the acknowledgment to a linguist on page xxxiii is anything to go by; but occasional advice from an outsider is no substitute for the full-time and co-equal involvement with educational colleagues that is required if genuine understanding on some of these issues is to be reached.) It seems to me that the absence of this contribution is one of the main reasons for the inadequacy of the treatment of language in this Report.[2] Recommendation 133 states unequivocably: ' Linguistics and other specialist studies of language have a considerable contribution to make to the teaching of English '. I believe this. I am not sure, after reading this Report, whether the Committee does.

Footnotes

1. This concept is superficially attractive, but if the term means what it says—an inventory, and no more—it is of limited assistance. (Page 261, it is *not* possible to have a checklist that is both ' short ' and ' sensitive '; and to suggest that it is, is merely to present the teacher with a further conflict of principles and practicality.) There is no substitute for a theoretical perspective, which can suggest coherent patterns in one's ' lists ', and tentative explanations of the data.

If such a perspective is aimed at, then one may well avoid the extremes cited in the Report of ending up with an instrument that is either too blunt of too time-consuming to use.

2. At the very least, some of the technical errors might have been avoided, e.g. the definition of morphemic structure as ' the relationship between spelling and meaning ' (p. 521), of phonemes as sounds (p. 84), each of which has a ' preparatory position in the speakers' vocal apparatus ' (p. 85), or of intonation as solely an expressive phenomenon (p. 144).

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Remedial aspects

RONALD GULLIFORD

Part VI of the Repor. has the title *Reading and Language Difficulties* and begins appropriately with a discussion of screening, diagnosis and recording. The term screening, taken over from the medical field, has been increasingly used in recent years to refer to a variety of procedures for identifying children who need special help. The word has become fashionable and is often used rather loosely. For example, it is sometimes used as though it were synonymous with a survey of attainments; sometimes it is used to refer to a diagnostic process. I would have welcomed an attempt to define the nature of screening more precisely.

The word screening implies a rather crude procedure. It we have lost a valuable article in the garden we might employ a sieve to sift through the soil. The fine earth falls through and we are left with lumps, stones and other debris. This is the screening process. We then have to look more carefully at these objects to identify what we are looking for. This is the diagnostic process.

I suggest that screening is not diagnostic. It is a procedure which can be applied (with the minimum time and expense, consistent with efficiency) to large numbers of children in order to identify those who fall below a certain level of educational achievement or of competence in critical functions. We might do this by drawing on teachers' observations; by obtaining samples of children's performance; by both; or by the use of other predictive indices. Since we are not, for our immediate purpose, interested in those who pass through the sieve or screen, it is not essential to use standardized tests though test performance below a certain cut-off point could be used. We might however wish to find, or devise, tasks which discriminated more effectively at the lower levels where we need them. In the screening process itself we are not concerned with diagnoses; we are simply concerned with finding those children on whom to spend our diagnostic time and skill in order to provide an

appropriate remedial programme. One views therefore with some unease the stated aim of one procedure reported to the Committee which included a group intelligence test ' to distinguish between those slow readers who can probably best be helped by periodic remedial teaching in normal schools and those whose general intellectual handicaps may be such that they will be helped most appropriately through full time special schooling '. That sort of question seems to me to be one for the diagnostic not the screening stage.

Clearly, we have a long way to go in developing and evaluating screening procedures and we may well find in the end that they are not practicable. In any case they are perhaps only an expedient. The Report makes the point very well, when it asserts that identification must be based upon the knowledge and skill of the teacher:

> the plain truth is that everything depends upon the diagnostic skill of the teacher. She is the one best placed to relate his (the child's) reading development to his intellectual development, his linguistic competence and his home circumstances. Compared with an assessment of this kind, the results of other measures to detect reading failure are bound to be crude. In our view the best method of screening is one of systematic observation and recording with selective testing of those pupils about whom detailed and specific information is required.

No one could disagree with this. It is the ideal state of affairs which should be the goal of our endeavours. But I would suggest that it describes a system of educational guidance rather than screening. It is not a new idea; it can be traced back at least to Susan Isaac's book *The Educational Guidance of the School Child* (1936). Screening seems to me a different and newer concept. It appeals to us because, whilst we are convinced of the importance of early recognition and treatment, the assessment skills and recording procedures described in the last paragraph have not been adequately developed nor can we rely on them because of other factors such as teacher and pupil mobility, variations in prevalence between schools and between teachers in their standards for making judgments. The Report recognizes this in paragraph 17.13.

The Report emphasises of course that screening must be followed by planned teaching—that's the whole point of the

exercise. While I agree in principle that ' a plan for subsequent action should be worked out in detail before any policy for screening is adopted ', I think the point is worth making that the evidence obtained from screening could be the lever for obtaining the resources. In the 1950s it was the many local reading surveys organised by LEAs and sometimes teachers' organisations which made the case for more remedial teachers.

In a discussion of the best time to screen, the Report recommends that screening should take place not earlier than the first term of the junior school. I think the Committee might have given more encouragement to the possibility of some form of screening procedure at the later stages of infant schooling. Perhaps it is not necessary to think of ' a best time ' for screening. If, in fact, the systematic observation and recording approach favoured by the Committee is even partially put into practice some *simple* procedure might be used every year. Among other things it would provide an additional purpose for record keeping.

The remainder of this Chapter is a useful discussion of diagnosis and recording in the teaching of reading. The findings of the Committee's survey of schools shows a depressing situation about teachers' knowledge and use of tests. The *Schonell Graded Words Reading Test* is used by 72·5% of schools while the *Standard Reading Tests* are used by 17·7% and the *Neale Analysis of Reading Ability* by only 16·6%. There is clearly a job to be done by colleges of education, by anyone concerned with short or long courses for teachers and by psychological and remedial services to ensure that all teachers of reading have as part of their basic professional competence a knowledge of the kinds of tests available, the purpose for which they are used and the value of the information they yield. In the past we have perhaps been wary of encouraging indiscriminate testing and many teachers have themselves been averse to tests. The remedy of course is not just to inform teachers about tests but to teach the use of them in the context of ' a thorough knowledge of what reading is and *the sub-skills it involves* ' (my italics). In this way teachers' own observations of children learning to read should be the foundation for assessment.

Chapter Eighteen of the Report offers a concise summary of present knowledge about the personal and environmental factors

associated with reading failure. But what of the remedy? The Committee does not see remedial teaching as something different or special; its methods are intrinsically the same as those of successful teachers anywhere and its essence is that the teacher is able to give additional time and resources to adapting methods to individual needs. Its view of remedial teaching is stated in the context of a belief that:

> in the primary school every teacher should consciously plan a reading programme which is designed to cater for the various levels of ability within the class. . . . In our view this should be a school's explicit policy whether or not it decides to give additional special help by a withdrawal system.

No one can doubt that if such a policy were the rule, there would be fewer pupils needing withdrawal for remedial teaching and, as the Report suggests, continued progress in reading would be ensured after remedial teaching in a withdrawal group has been discontinued.

In the Committee's survey of primary schools, 10% of the pupils were considered to be in need of special help in reading. The commonest way of providing this was by withdrawal for separate remedial teaching (although 12% of schools organized one or more special registration classes). 69% of the teachers involved in withdrawal groups were part-timers, 29% of whom had attended no relevant in-service course and 46% had attended one of less than six weeks. Perhaps it is not surprising therefore that the Committee suggests more flexible arrangements should be considered whereby, for example, the part-time teacher takes the whole class while the full-time teacher takes the remedial groups. The closest liaison is urged between the remedial and class teachers and the Committee stresses that wherever possible help in learning to read should be related to the rest of the child's learning. The Report wisely cautions against the danger that ' a monotonous and prolonged emphasis on remedial work ' may be at the expense of wider curriculum opportunities. This is very much an issue for secondary schools and the Committee refers to the main dilemma: remedial classes facilitate the teaching of reading in relation to other learning, though curriculum opportunities may be restricted; in a mixed-ability organization withdrawal groups are needed and the reading may be unrelated to other

learning. The Committee comments with favour on approaches where the remedial teacher works alongside specialists, basing remedial work on the reading needs of subject areas.

The Committee is right to emphasize all teachers' responsibility for remedial language and reading—' there is no mystique about remedial education '. This does not mean that there is no special expertise. We need specialist remedial teachers equipped by training and experience to assess and treat the various and puzzling difficulties of children with more severe disorders of learning. The Report recognizes this in its recommendation that there should be a reading clinic or reading centre in every authority to give ' more intensive treatment than the ordinary school can provide ' and to offer an advisory service in co-operation with other advisers.

The section in the Report on reading and language difficulties concludes with a chapter on adult illiteracy and one on children from families of overseas origin. Provision for adult non-readers has been very inadequate and until recently there has been little discussion of a problem which can have serious consequences for the individual's adjustment to life and work and may well be associated with mental health problems. The first priority is to increase provision by close co-operation between LEA and voluntary schemes; LEAs should be generous in giving financial and other support and should provide in-service training courses for all tutors engaged in this work. This seems particularly important since volunteers from many walks of life have much to offer but the tutor's task is a complex one involving counselling as well as teaching. There is almost a virgin field for the development of suitable materials and resources and their evaluation. A major problem is ensuring that illiterates, who are often reluctant to come forward for help, are found and informed of the teaching and counselling available. It is recommended that LEAs should co-ordinate and develop these information services. It is important that social services, employers, youth leaders, secondary schools and many other agencies should be thoroughly alerted to the problem and should know what forms of help are available. One hopes that the Committee's recommendations will be energetically and imaginatively carried out.

The Report contains a useful overview of the needs of children of families from overseas and stresses that much more is needed than special arrangements for the initial teaching of English as a second language. Concern is expressed about a 'disturbingly low pattern of attainment' and the Committee urges the greater awareness of cultural and linguistic factors which continuously affect response to education. These factors have implications for the choice of curriculum content and materials related to children's own cultural background and experience, and for greater liaison between schools and homes and more involvement of members of minority communities in the roles of teacher and helper. 'A sensitivity and openness to language in all its forms' is suggested as the central recommendation of this Chapter and is exemplified in the need for a positive attitude to the West Indian dialect and in the suggestion that bilingualism in schools should be the subject of research since it is seldom discussed in the context of inner city immigrant populations. As the Report states:

> Their bilingualism is of greatest importance to the children and their families. . . . Certainly the school should adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bilingualism and wherever possible should help to maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongue.

In line with their views on remedial teaching, the Committee stresses the need for specialist teachers of language to work in close liaison with other teachers and for ordinary teachers to continue help with language beyond the initial stages of learning. At the secondary stage, particularly, language and subject specialists need to co-operate in assessing linguistic demands across the curriculum and in providing additional help both to Creole-speakers and second-language learners. The Committee recognizes that additional staffing for this purpose would be costly and difficult to recruit but they are probably right in seeing no other realistic solution to this form of under-functioning.

It came as a surprise to read that no-one has studied the specific problems of West Indian children in learning to read. As the Schools Council project found, generalizations are of dubious value but a study of cognitive, linguistic and motivational factors might yield clues of significance for teaching.

In conclusion, I would state my own view that the most

valuable contribution which this Report makes to the problems of children who have reading and language difficulties is its emphasis on the importance of every teacher having a thorough understanding of how children learn to read and of every school having an explicit policy for planning the teaching of reading as a continuous process from the initial stages through to the secondary stage. I hope that at least this message will get through.

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Teacher education

DONALD MOYLE

Research over the years has produced conflicting evidence concerning the part played by the teacher in the level of success achieved by children in reading. Consequently, we have Bond and Dykstra (1967) suggesting that the teacher is the most important factor whilst Thorndike (1973) suggested that the teacher was far less important than certain other variables. Such evidence can often be questioned in terms of design and the criteria by which child success was judged. However, when one looks at the variables which could influence the level of success achieved such as social background, parental influence, individual abilities and interests, materials and methods employed and the quality of teaching, it becomes apparent that some are difficult for the school to influence.

There is no doubt that co-operation with parents, community education and good courses in child care in our secondary schools will be helpful to raising standards in the use of language. However, these are for the most part influential in the long rather than the short term. The re-orientation of factors within society at large is a slow process and involves agencies other than the school. Improvement in the quality of teaching and materials would seem to offer a better hope of increasing the level of attainment in the use of language especially in the short term.

Over the past few years the confidence of many teachers has been sapped by attention given in the mass media to suggestions of falling standards on the one hand and on the other to the suggestion that teachers can do little to combat the difficulties of an inadequate social background or 'diseases' such as dyslexia. The Bullock Committee has done the teaching profession a great service in emphasizing the importance to language and reading development of the expertise and commitment of teachers. In return, the profession must ensure that the

opportunity is capitalized upon. Thought and energy are now demanded from teachers to reappraise their work and in colleges and LEAs to re-examine the nature and impact of their services and training programmes.

Initial courses

The Report asks that all students should have a language course and this is to be welcomed for unfortunately there are still many who think that language and reading are not suitable areas of study for students preparing for secondary education and some who feel it rather unnecessary, except for remedial teachers, even at the junior stage. Having received a questionnaire relating to a probationary teacher's college course in reading a head teacher telephoned to say that surely it would be a waste of his time to complete a questionnaire when the teacher concerned didn't teach reading. On being asked what the teacher did, the head replied that he was the class teacher of the eight plus year group.

More unfortunate, however, is that in the design of courses for the new era of teacher education the pressure for a graduate profession and the desire of the universities for high academic standards has resulted sometimes in a reduction of the time available for professional studies courses. This is especially so for students who intend to teach in secondary schools where most teaching method time available is allocated to the specialist teaching subject. It is to be hoped that the Report will help to change this situation.

The Report sets out two specimen syllabuses for initial teacher training in the language area. Though rather different in their emphasis and approach they share the same basic conceptual framework. Firstly they draw together content which is at present divided among a number of courses. Language development, the development of the thought processes which have usually been included in the Theory of Education courses, joins with the study of language and literature from English courses and Reading courses. Secondly, both syllabuses demand that the study of teaching methods and materials should arise from an understanding of all the factors influencing the learning processes.

The blending of an understanding of both theory and practice is to be welcomed for experience suggests that students do not always relate together various aspects of their courses without help. Further, the Report by its whole atmosphere suggests an end to the senseless argument concerning teacher training, namely whether professional courses should concentrate on teaching techniques or the study of the issues, problems and learning processes. Both understanding and teaching expertise are essential in the teacher and each one contributes to the development of the other.

The Report could have gone somewhat further in the production of a truly integrated course of study, though this would have been beyond the brief that the Committee was given. The direction suggested is that of a course in communication studies where movement, music and mathematics would be included. These are not only forms of communication in their own right but also interact with the use of the English language. This broader view would seem essential to an understanding of social interaction, work in the classroom and the evaluation of mass media. The latter development is somewhat of a personal dream but the courses proposed by the Report have, in any case, wide-reaching consequences in respect of staffing and the way in which courses are to be organized and taught. Most colleges already have had considerable difficulty in mounting courses in the teaching of reading for all students, owing to a lack of staff who have both practical experience and appropriate background knowledge. English departments are usually much stronger on the literature side than on the language side and psycho-linguists and socio-linguists are difficult to find, whilst many tutors working on reading courses do it as a minor commitment of their work in the Education Department.

The Report briefly acknowledges these difficulties (23.21 and 24.14) but they would seem to be more extensive than the impression given. Apart from the sheer numbers of staff required, there is also the whole question of the nature of the organization of courses and the qualifications and experience of the staff. It has already been suggested that a course which is taught in a number of separate units may well have all the right ingredients and yet fail because the student does not automatically make the necessary link between the

various aspects of the course which are relevant for any given learning and teaching situation.

There would seem to be a number of ways in which this transfer of learning problem may be tackled:

(1) the staff concerned with teaching the various units of the course could come together to plan the course and note those points at which links, interactions and consequences should be pointed out to the students. The points of contact could be highlighted by the setting of assignments and practical tasks to synthesize the learning;

(2) the specialist teaching of the course could be backed by a tutorial system where one tutor would have the responsibility of overviewing the total work within the course, the assessment of work, discussion and workshops for a group of students;

(3) the reverse of (2) where the tutorial work becomes the main element of the course and specialist teaching takes a minor proportion of the time available;

(4) the whole course could centre around the involvement of the students in the work of a class of children and all studies form a back-up service to the on-going provision of satisfactory language learning pursuits.

The last alternative though appealing would be difficult to organize for large numbers of students and would not be welcomed by examining bodies who look for a syllabus and an ability to test work within the syllabus by the medium of an examination. Many schools also seem to be resistant to the constant presence of students within the classroom.

Of the alternatives listed, it is felt that (3) holds out the best hope of success in the foreseeable future but equally it demands teams of tutors who have a wide experience and a general knowledge of the language field combined with a specialism in one of the language areas. The lack of courses and career structures in this field in the past means that such people are going to be few in number and we can only hope that provision of the necessary training opportunities will be expanded considerably in the next few years.

The Report suggests (23.11) that all students should have a course of at least 100 hours and preferably 150 hours in language and reading. This probably represents an increased demand in terms of courses for secondary teachers in most colleges but it is possibly less than is already undertaken by primary students. If one adds together work already done under a variety of headings, for example, in one college eighty hours English, forty hours Reading and a further forty hours concerned with various linguistic aspects in the Principles of Education course, we already have 160 hours. This is all staff/student contact time and does not include attachments for practical work or personal reading and assignments.

One PGCE course for example already has a Language in Education course of 170 hours including some practical work. Yet the Report envisages that the 100 hours minimum will not be possible for this type of student. Obviously, there are all sorts of conflicting demands for timetable space but as language is central to learning and is the major mode of the communication of learning within schools, then 100 hours out of a total of from 1,200 to 1,500 hours within a complete initial training course seems an underestimate of the needs. This is especially so if we are to endeavour to give even an introduction to all the language areas listed in the specimen syllabuses.

One would like to have seen rather more stress on the necessity of practical experience within language courses. In the USA students are normally given many hours of constantly supervised work with children which is certainly not paralleled by our school practice situation. The nearest we can perhaps come to this within our resources is to have attachments to schools for, say, half day sessions per week, where the students would undertake assignments with groups and individual children under the guidance of a specialist teacher within the school. The specialist teachers and college tutors would need to have regular meetings in order to give direction to such work and associate it with the lectures and workshops which take place within the college. Some colleges are already undertaking work of this type but it would seem so helpful that it should be more extensive and common to the preparation of all students.

Induction year

Obviously the Committee was in considerable difficulty in trying to recommend policies with regard to teacher education when the whole pattern of future provision was in doubt. At this moment, however, its hopes for the continual support of the young teacher in his first year of service appear likely to meet the same fate as the idea of county colleges did after the 1944 Act.

In theory, the idea envisaged in the James Report (1972) and the White Paper which followed it appears an excellent one. In practice, however, there seems little enthusiasm to make the plan succeed except in the form of pilot schemes in one or two places. At the moment and for the foreseeable future, therefore, we cannot depend upon the young teacher having the regular guidance of an experienced and knowledgeable colleague nor of being released to attend discussions and extension courses within normal working hours. It is this situation which convinces the present writer that the first priority is to establish a post in every school for a specialist in language work.

A pattern for development

The Report suggests a need for a National Centre for Language in Education. One such centre would seem to have much to offer in terms of the co-ordination of research and the dissemination of information. In terms of advisory work and the mounting of courses it is surely more economic and effective to have a number of such centres. There could be one in each of the areas that have been united under a regional advisory council for teacher training. The selection of a centre where extensive work is already in operation and where resources already exist would mean that expansion of the work would require only minimal expenditure. All LEAs, teachers' centres and colleges within that area could be linked together and all parties become concerned in the in-service education within the area.

The centre is seen as being a base which would give the opportunity for all parties concerned to discuss policy. It would also support local in-service programmes, give help to schools in the re-appraisal of their curriculum, offer advisory services on materials and methods to teachers and operate courses both within the centre and at other bases throughout the area.

The centre would require only a small full-time staff as the nature of the work implies that in all its activities it would work hand in hand with advisers, teachers and lecturers throughout the area. As such, a good deal of the teaching on courses would be undertaken on a part-time basis by colleagues who already hold a full-time position within the area but who have a special knowledge or expertise. Each area centre would eventually mount courses leading to advanced diplomas and masters degrees in all the specialisms which have a direct relationship to language work within the schools. Each should also be concerned in some aspect of research.

Obviously it would be a few years before all such advanced work could be in operation in every centre but in the meantime there are many services that could be offered, some of which could be put into operation in the coming year. Some examples are briefly outlined below but they are by no means the only possible types of action, nor are they set out in any order of priority:

(1) support services to individual schools in the analysis of language work and the devising of new curricula;

(2) the joint operation with LEA staff of courses for language specialists within schools. Such courses might be one day per week throughout one academic year with assignments to be completed between the meetings. It would be helpful if the personnel for such courses could be drawn from all the schools in a given geographical area so that continuing development and co-operation within an area could be set in motion;

(3) short courses for non-specialist teachers to increase sensitivity and awareness of language needs in various areas, e.g. beginning reading and reading in the content areas;

(4) short courses for specialist teachers to ensure awareness of recent research, materials and methods, e.g. ' Methods of Assessing Reading ' for remedial reading teachers and ' Language Teaching ' for English teachers in secondary schools;

(5) the provision of support facilities for study groups of teachers to investigate various aspects of language work within their schools.

Conclusion

The provision of a language specialist teacher within every school would perhaps be the most powerful early step towards improving the quality of language work. It would follow, therefore, that the priority need would be the training of teachers for such posts. Should this training get underway, then there will grow up a greater demand for more advanced and specialist training at diploma level and beyond. This, together with the hope of a career structure in the language and reading field, should in the long term ensure that colleges and LEAs will have far less difficulty in finding people who, by virtue of understanding and experience, can become leaders within the language field.

The impact of the Report has been lessened, even soured, by the decision of the Secretary of State to preface it with a statement that no extra finance will be made available for the implementation of its recommendations. Thus, it will be the responsibility of those already in the field to persuade LEAs and colleges to divert more of their resources towards language and reading.

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